# Indian Author

Quarterly Journal of
Authors Guild of India

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about Voltaire

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# INDIAN AUTHOR

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# EDITORIAL

## KEEP THE DIALOGUE GOING

*The Trivandrum session of the A G I Convention will be discussing, among other problems, one problem of unique importance.*

*The Dialogue between the North and the South is of great importance in national affairs today.*

*This dialogue is important not merely because of its political import but it is also of cultural, social and literary importance.*

*Gone are the days when the northerner in his ignorance thought all persons south of Madras spoke a language called Madrassi.*

*The attempts of the south to make themelves felt in the main stream of Indian events have not always been successful as is evident on most hands.*

*Regional chauvinisms, both in the north and the south, have kept the people at bay. A refusal to understand and accept national integration is at the bottom of such misunderstanding.*

*Only a heartfelt dialogue between the north and the south can forge a national idea.*

*To know each other, both the north and the south, have to make continuous and intensive efforts.*

*It is often felt by the people in the south that their cause goes by default; that the north is not interested in what it is doing and saying and feeling.*

*Often even chronicles of historical events of the recent past in the hands of northern scholars tend to ignore the events and the personalities of the south.*

*Because the south had no traumatic experience like Partition, events are generally neglected.*

*Anyhow this is what the southerner claims. And he can point out to many instances of total neglect and does feel hurt at it.*

*This feeling of hurt whether it has cause or is imaginary has to be corrected in the interests of national health.*

*If the south expresses fears of the chauvinism of the north it is augmented by the language debates that are more or less political exercises and might mean nothing in the larger run of events.*

*But that such a fear exists has to be granted and the north will have to approach the language question with a fresh mind.*

*The importance of one language - for communication, government and education cannot be gainsaid. It is evident that language plays a large part in the unification of a nation.*

*But language, like religion, in these days of larger humanism, should not be allowed to usher in more diversity, more fissiparous tendencies, more fragmentation in the country than we can afford.*

*Cultural diversity is and should be welcome. Cultural regimentation and unity might not be easy and even if easy may not be wholly healthy,*

*But tempers should not be frayed in the preservation of the unique diversity that is India's glory.*

*This is where a dialogue becomes necessary-a civilised dialogue that will ease tensions all round.*

*In matters literary it is obvious that there is great imbalance. The scholars of the north know very little about the great masterpieces of the south and do not care. Often even translations are not available of the great books of the south in many of the languages of the north.*

*The south on the other hand has been more or less liberal in accepting and translating many of the classics of the north.*

*Probably the imbalance might be corrected by an urgent formation of a Library of Indian Literature which will make available in one of the languages of India, it might be in Hindi or better*

*still English, all the worth while books of all the modern languages of India of the recent and the remote past.*

*Another way of implementing literary national integration might be the coming into being in our Universities of courses in Indian literature which will impartially look at output both in the south and north.*

*The northern literary tradition should become heir to Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu classics as the south has to a partial extent striven to be heir to the tradition of Kabir, Tulsidas Tagore and others.*

*The coming into being of Indian literature courses in Indian Universities is not a thing that should be difficult. We have had a hundred and fifty years of the literary renaissance in India in the various languages to look back to. And each language literature has its own welldefined literary traditions which should not be ignored.*

*A Library of Indian Literature and University courses in Indian Literature instead of the various regional literatures as obtains today might go a long way in creating the atmosphere for an effective dialogue between the north and the south.*

*Perhaps the commissioning of critical histories of literature in India including all the languages will help such a dialogue even more effectively if the work is done with objective literary standards.*

*Time was when histories of Indian literature dealt only with Sanskrit literature. But in recent decades Hindi, Tamil and other languages have been included in such histories. Other languages including even the latest recruit to the Sahitya Akademi like Konkani should be included bringing it into line with the national effort.*

*The dialogue between the north and the south which the Kerala session of the AGI Convention inaugurates occurs at a crucial time in our national history, Members should look forward to participating in it each contributing his mite to the national image.*

# THE WRITER AND HIS FREEDOM

G. D. KHOSLA

The writer's claim to the right of freedom of expression has always been a source of anxiety to the establishment. Those who occupy the seats of power, in their preoccupation with the business of holding and maintaining their positions, become suspicious of a new idea, a new ethical philosophical challenge and of even a critical appraisement of the established order, for the exercise of power inevitably produces a sense of guilt and the fear of a change in the order of things.

When the Papal power increased, the Pope assumed the authority to prescribe reading matter. The Spanish Inquisition instituted the Index Expurgatorius, banning those who professed loyalty to the Catholic Faith from reading certain books. In England, licencing laws of three centuries ago, prohibited the publication of any book which failed to secure the approval of the Stationers Company, constituted by ninety-seven printers who obtained the exclusive patent to print books whithin the British Dominions. This patent and the subsequent ordinances of the Star Chamber acquired the control of the Press were followed by the 1643 Order of the British Parliament by virtue of which no book could be printed unless it had been approved by the offiicials appointed for that purpose.

John Milton, the poet, defied the Order by publishing his views on divorce, without the licence required by Parliament. And when proceedings were instituted against him, he wrote and published his famous pamphlet, *Areopagitica*, which is a spirited plea for free expression and the writer's right to promulgate his ideas.

Milton argued that even if censorship was aimed at suppressing only evil, the practice cannot be lauded. Good and Evil, he protested, grow together, and the Good can only be distinguished and identified by means of the Evil. How can one individual or a small group of individuals arrogate to themselves the wisdom of determi-

ning what is good and what is bad? "Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopolised and traded in by tickets and statutes and standards. We must not think to make a staple commodity all the knowledge in the land, to mark and licence it like our broadcloth and our wool packs."

Milton's brave pamphlet stands out as an act of great courage. Seven years later, he was associated as a censor or supervising editor of *Mercurius Politicus*, a popular paper, but his business was only a friendly supervision of the editor and it could not be equated with censorship.

The Ruler has always been afraid of thinkers and writers, for they give him a sense of insecurity, a feeling that their quiet, subtle, invisible persuasion is more dangerous than open rebellion or senseless violence. Aurangzeb forebade all contemporary recording of the events of his reign. The British Government in India took action against a seditious speech or writing more promply and more energetically than against a murderer or a robber. In more recent times, the nineteen month long nightmare of the Emergency was marked by a ruthless suppression of free speech and free writing. Elsewhere, free writers continue to seek refuge or asylum outside their own land.

But censorship and the stifling of ideas never secured the purpose aimed at. Nor can all the restrictions, laws and sanctions that med can think of and devise silence a writer or exercise the spirit that bids him transfer his thoughts to paper. Milton's *Areopagitica*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, a secret history of Aurangzeb's reign. underground literature of the Emergency era, all bear witness to the indomitable spirit of writers. Like the Persian Poet, they felt:

*Mara dardest ander dil agar goyam zuban sozad,*

*Wagar dım dar kasham tarsam ki maghz-i-ustakhan sozzad.*

(There is a soreness in my heart, which if it finds utterance will burn my tongue. But if I hold my breath, the very marrow of my bones will be scorched.)

A writer has perforce to be a thinker, and thinker's functions is *rerum dognoscere causas*, to seek, to become acquainted with the reasons behind things, the causes of events. This is attained by study, thought and analysis. The writer then records his thought processes and conclusions. Sometimes, he will suggest a remedy, a solution of the existing problems or the prevailing malady of the society, the body politic. Often the remedy suggested is unpalatable to the establishment, but for this very reason, it desreves greater consideration and a more careful examination lest the neglect of the malady lead to disasterous consequences.

It is a far-seeing and wise ruler who entertains an independent advisor and guarantees him immunity against victimisation for adverse criticism. As Milton said, God has given men the gift of reason to enable them to choose for themselves. There is no merit in doing right, unless we know what is wrong and reject it. "Give me," he pleaded in *Areopagitica*, "the liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely, according to conscience, above all liberties."

The Authors Guild has always raised its voice, both corporate and individual, against censorship, and has argued the case for complete freedom for writers. There are enough legal provisions in the criminal codes of the country to deter the utterance of libellous or other forms of deleterious matter and to punish the contravenor of these laws. The question whether the work of a writer offends against decency, morality or the security of the State must be determined by a Court of Law, deliberating openly, under the protective and watchful gaze of the public, and not by an oligarchy of a few individuals, mostly unlearned and of common capacity, sitting behind closed doors. We are all familiar with the pathetic working of State-owned media of Radio and Television where there is no question of the writer being free. What we get is a transmuted version after the constricting hold of unimaginative, dull-witted and fear-infected bureaucrats has mauled and maimed the original. All we learn is what one Minister said and another did to make his image brighter. What a writer may wish to say in contradiction or correction is instantly blue-pencilled. But criticism is not always gratuitous abuse: it can be constructive of material

and moral development. Those who choose to expose themselves to the public eye should not be too sensitive.

Let the writer be given the freedom to work, and let him, according to his conscience and his wisdom, write without fear of intimidation or the incentive of unmerited favours.

There is more in life than unadulterated, dedicated materialism. Indeed, materialism has within it the germ that will destory even its own purposes, and we can see that it is already destroying them. It is for the thinkers and writers to restore the balance and point out the indispensable need for moral, spiritual and aesthetic values in living a sane and integrated life.

**KA NAA SUBRAMANYAM**

This number of the Indian Author was designed to carry a full quota of articles by members of the A G I on the theme as suggested above.

But in spite of the vague ideas of freedom that are haunting us there has been poor response for articles on the theme. Only two author-members wrote and both their pieces find their place in subsequent pages. The President of the A G I, Mr G D Khosla was kind enough at short notice to write for us a piece on freedom expressing his views on the historical and legal aspects of it. I set down my thoughts here for what they are worth. These are random reflections on the freedom of the author, not a studied essay.

There is practically no use of discussions on freedom in the abstract though we tend mostly to look upon it in the abstract. Or to criticise the other fellow for having misused his freedom. Much of our reflections on freedom are, or seem to be conditioned by, what the other fellows did or did not do under specific and nameable conditions. We react, rather than act, thus making of freedom a negative instead of a positive thing.

Freedom has a most positive quality. It is twice blessed like mercy—it blesses him that takes his freedom and blesses him that receives it and can honour it.

The basic fact about freedom can be expresed in a Goldsmith phrase: freedom is as freedom does. Not as freedom can do or should do. Freedom is an absolute value though we tend often to make of it a relatively dependant thing - dependant on circumstances.

Freedom is not conferred on the author by others extraneous to him. The freedom that he craves he takes for himself despite what others might do or how they might react, and he enjoys and suffers the consequences of such freedom as he takes with a good face, without hopes of advancement because he has demonstrated his freedom.

The freedom of the author is what the work he is creating demands and which the writer takes for himself unmindful of the consequences. No author begins by delimiting to himself the freedom he needs. If he is an author who is worth while he will not compromise under any circumstances on his writing and its inner compulsions. Consequences from censors, from the public, from the establishment, from the Government, from others might blow from outside after the work is done-in fact after the author has finished what he has to do and washed his hands of it. But the work done is his, so he should accept the responsibility for what he has done after it is done. Dante could go into exile, Voltaire could be clapped in to the Bastille, Robert Emmett could be hanged for what he did or wrote as was a Sir Thomas More in "civilised" England. A Jawaharlal Nehru or a Mahatma Gandhi could be jailed for what he wrote but they did not disown it nor would they have dreamt of disowning whatever they wrote. We admire such freedom though many may not be capable of it. It is what we call courage of conviction and the freedom of expressing that conviction as best as one can.

Hitler's was the worst tyranny that the modern world has witnessed. Speaking at a PEN forum on freedom Heinrich Boell observed that the writers of Hitler's domains who were outwardly and seemingly silent were however exercised about their freedom. He mentioned the names of scores of writers who wrote poems

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"Pen is stronger than the sword". Surely yes. But there is a condition. The dictum to come true commands that the pen-holder—the author—should not be afraid of the sword-brandisher that is the soldier subservient to the will of the Government of the time, be it democracy, dictatorship or monarchy.

French Revolution and the Freedom Movement in India were fed and bred by the penholders, rating freedom to die above living by just eking out existence. So they expressed themselves not daunted by the Sceptre of Death. In the end, the sword of the Imperiatist was laid low.

Lord Tennyson was the Poet Laureate of England. He made a Trio with Poets Wordsworth and Browning being the other two tiers. Browning sighed and expressed his mind thus:

> "For a handful of sliver he left us,
> For a ribbon to stick in his coat,"

No envy. But anguish. And this lamentation at what ! As the Laureate he must sing to the glory of the Crown. The Poet was dead. A bard at the court was born.

The point to bear in mind is that a penholder should be very sensitive, exactly in the manner of a needle in relation to a magnet means the freedom of expression. A Laureate is a mercenary in the field of letters. He is on the royal pay-roll. He is not an author. He has mortgaged his freedom to create conditions for the rule of law to rule supreme. He is no longer an unblemished votary of the Deity of the Freedom of Expression. The rest is a big boast and a facesaving device.

From the small to the big. From the self to the self of the others. I am a writer. Manuscripts in plenty are lying under Lock and key. The unhappy situation is rooted in the want of money and market.

We "Sindhis" are a handful, a drop in the Indian ocean. And they are so spread-over that a good number of us do not have even a chance to know the language our Mother gave us. On the top of it, we are smarting under a curse of the Script, Sindhi versus Devnagri. We are a vanishing race. It is my reading of the situation. Be it God ! I may be proved wrong. But as it is, there is no market. A Sindhi writer, in general, is in search of advertisements which do no grace to the written word; or a patron may be with values not worth commemorating,

A chance came my way. A gentleman to commemorate the memory of his father, desired to finance the show. He did advance some money also. I took up the work. It was complete in manuscript form when I received his letter containing instructions. To me, it was evident that he wanted to give the book a look of a family album and to read as a grand genealogical tree with branches so wide spread as to bring in their fold even the distant ones in the brother-hood. And the fun of it was that further details of like nature were yet to be awaited.

It was an irritant and the writer in me was annoyed. I wrote back to say that I had no more claim on the amount advanced and that it was lying in trust meaning that on his final reply it shall be remitted. I had made the point clear beyoud doubt that I wanted the book to be an exposition of the philosophy of life his great father had expounded and preached through practice, and in that I would strictly adhere even to the events of his personal life only in such parts as answered the context which was "how to work for the salvation of soul and yet be accountable to one's fellow-beings at home and abroad". I left him in no doubt that I was not to be treated as an Editor of a paper owned by a capitalist.

The point went home. I received a reply leaving matters to my discretion with a promise that further sum was to follow through remittance.

On an auspicious day, for I took the assignment as a holy biography, I went to the press. On return, lo ! to my suprise I found another letter advising postponement and a journey to his

city at his expenses for consultations I at once grew serious and began to search my mind to know whether I was motivated by earning a name as an author, whatever be the means, or that I loved work on personal ground and would see it through, whatever may be the cost and the prospects of finding a market for it. I was happy to feel that I loved the works, wrote back that it was too late in the day to delay the publication of the book and that I found no point in undertaking the journey for consultations as I had enough personal material to give a life sketch of the departed soul glorified by his divine precepts and instructive practices.

The book came out of the press. It was light for me. Financial considerations weighed at the initial stage. But I am certainly disillusioned and seized of a sad thought as to how a poor writer is doomed to die un-sung for want of funds, or if he hankered after name earned on gathering alms in each, how he is to play false to self to sell another man's thoughts at the cost of his own and so deceive a reader. I have grown sobre.

Writings of political context are also in store. The whip of the Government is the deterrent. I am a coward. But Government is immoral. Chairs change. And the professions about "Freedome of Expression", not-withstanding, the whip lashes on the person, or squeezes him through a near and dear one. I take no refuge behind the saving clause that discretion is the better part of valour. Nothing compares better with a will to maintain dignity, as a man. Should I then come out with the writings? For, to hide is also to sin. But, alas! I am not of that stuff made.

A writer, worth the name, is a reformer. He is a lender and borrower in one. He borrows through eyes and lends through his mind. Observe and improve on angularities. But he has proved truant. And this, for very personal reasons, cheap popularity and saleable writings. As on the screen, so in black and white, sex comes handy. Degraded human caricatures are drawn and presented—an evidence of a perverted mind. "Books are good companions" is an adage that has lost its edge.

*[Contd on Page 15]*

MORE than two hundred years back (1776) the heroes of the American War of Indepndence proclaimed to the world in their famous Declaration of Independance that men are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights., that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Government are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government.

Since then this Declaration has been a constant source of inspiration to the revolutionaries all over the world. It inspired the French Revolution towards the end of the eighteenth century and the Russian Revolutions in the first quarter of the twenteith century. It inspired hundreds of thousands of people to rebel against tyranny and oppression and suffer persecution and death. But tyranny and oppression still persist in human society and hence the need for resistance to deliberate destruction of human rights.

But we cannot know if the government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed unless there is a free play of opinions. The Fathers of the American constitution were very much conscious of the importance of the Freedom of Expression. Therefore, the constitution they drafted for the new Rapublic provided among other things that "Congress shall make no law ..... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances".

After about two hundred years of uninterrupted rule the Britishers left India in 1947. The responsibility for drafting a Constitution for new India devolved upon our political leaders. They adopted a democratic Constitution the philosophic foundation of which is, social, economic and political justice, liberty of

thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and opportunity. Although India had no democratic tradition and the people no taste of democratic right, they cherished the various social and political rights guaranteed by the constitution.

But when in June 1975 our the then Prime Minister Srimati Indira Gandhi unceremoniously took away these rights on a flimsy pretext the people in general kept mum. They did not make any loud protest. Their reaction was one of complete bewilderment. Our intellectuals including the authors remained at a safe distance and maintained a prudent silence. The government propaganda machinery was ordered to operate in full gear to make the people believe that restrictions on their freedoms were demanded by the promotion of their general interest and by the need to save democracy. That the people did not believe this nonsense was proved by the General Election of March 1977. A silent revolution took place. The government of Indira Gandhi was replaced by a new government which promised to restore democracy.

But the fact remains that the Indian authors failed in the discharge of their resposibility. The Second National Convention of Indian authors was held in New Delhi in January 1976. This convention was inaugurated by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi under elaborate security arrangements. In fact, security officials outnumbered the authors present in the Convention Hall. The Prime Minister delivered her sermon regarding the responsibilities of the authors most of whom were found in a mood to oblige her. There was none to put any searching question to her. One of our fellow authors proposed on the first day of the convention to adopt a resolution condemning restrictions on democratic freedoms. But the Executive of the Authors Guild did not even allow him to table the motion. Why? It appeared to this author that a fear psychosis gripped the whole band of Indian authors.

One of our fellow authors Mr. M. A. Naidu of Hyderabad wrote a book on Indira Gandhi. He wanted to present a copy of his book personally to the Prime Minister. He was not permitted to do so. Was it then the Prime Minister herself also suffered from

a fear psychosis? Two of our journalist authors in West Bengal, Gour Kishore Ghosh and Barun Sengupta did, of course, protest against Emergency and both of them were held under MISA.

My younger brother Santi Ranjan Bhuinya was arrested on 12.8.76 under Article 16 (A) of the Maintence of Internal Security Act. In this connection I met a Cabinet Minister of West Bengal (Mr. Gurupada Khan of Land and Land Revenue Department) with whom I once lived together for several years in Central Government bachelors' quarters at Dover Lane Extension, Calcutta. He barely recognised me and summarily dismissed me saying "I shall not do anything for a MISA detenu". I wished I could tell him, "Mr. Khan, you were not born a minister and you will not remain so all through your life". But I could not lest I be also held under MISA. On my returning home, I was having some burning sensation and got down to address a letter to the Editor of the Statesman. But I restained myself. The spector of MISA was still haunting my mind. I also met Prof. Satindranath Chakravorti, a Congress theoretician, who was intimately connected with some State and central ministers. He pleaded his helplessness and told me that a business man from Port Blair, who happened to be his relative, was arrested under MISA because he contributed some money to Ananda Marg and that he could not secure his release. I asked him why they were not protesting against such reckless use MISA? I got no reply. My brother was released on the day following the withdrawal of Emergency. The experiences that I gathered during the period of his detention might provide enough material for a best seller. But unfortunately I do not have the facile pen of a Kuldip Nayar or a Mankekar.

At the Second National convention of Indian authors I had the rare opportunity to see our Prime Minister face to face from close quarters. For about an hour I studied her facial expressions very minutely to find out some traits of a dictator in her. I now frankly admit that I did not find any. She looked every inch a mother–a housewife. How then could she wield such enormous powers? Possibly because she found the Indian masses including the intelligentsia readily submissive to her dictation.

I do believe, if the Indian authors as a body could raise their voice against the erosion of the democratic foundation of our Constitution, her position would have been untenable. If eternal vigilance is the price for liberty, the fact remains that our authors were not prepared to pay this price. They preferred to go on with the benefits of their social position than to risk detention without trial. But when Emergency was lifted and Indira Gandhi was no longer in power many of our authors came out with their publications denouncing Emergency and its concomitant vices.

How different was the position of the intellectuals in Hitlerite Germany. They maintained their defiant attitude right up to the end of the Third Reich and preferred to suffer humiliation and indignities, unknown terms in concentration camps and even death than to prostrate themselves at the feet of a dictator.

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*[Contd from page 11]*

Who can help stop this march towards Dooms-day, in the realm of literature? Perhaps, our Guild can, and certainly in close collaboration of the Sahitya Akademy. Two together can work wonders. An outspoken penholder is to be encouraged and protected against the sword-bearer. He is to be regarded as a national asset rated above the Government. The honour of the Lady literature is at stake, and with it, the civilization of man.

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"Well-remembered books are eminently re-readable."

—Alexander Gerhschenkron in *On Reading Books: A Barbatian's Cogitations.*

# The news media as an instrument of Government Policy

☐ D. R. Mankekar

Even in the 19th century, in the days of the pigeon post and the telegraph and the cable, ambitious European statesmen, monarchs and heads of state exploited the media to stir the cauldron of European political intrigue and maneuver. Then media comprised only the press, and particularly the news agency.

Britain, France and Germany, the three major rival powers of Europe of the time, indeed used the press as an instrument of policy and a weapon to discomfit each other. Thus Reuter, Havas and Wolffe, the three news agencies, respectively owned by the three powers, were manipulated to do propaganda against each other preliminary to precipitating a war.

Kent Cooper, the intrepid general manager of AP in the '2os and '30s, in his relentless crusade against Reuter's world news monophly, charged that the foreign propaganda carried on through these channels over a hundred years, had been one of the causes of wars, and that the news barriers around Germany had contributed to the cause of Hitler's rise to power and the eventual outbreak of World War I1 within the short space of 20 years.

Kent Cooper accused Reuter of "a domination the like of which for international remifications, complications and regimentation of the world opinion has never been equalled." Kent Cooper then went on to allege: "International attitudes have developed from the impressions and prejudices aroused by what the news agencies reported, Monopoly made the system of deception work,"

Sir Roderick Jones, the distinguished chairman of Reuters during the peak of the British Empire's glory, in the '20s and '30s, openly boasted: "Reuter's news in some from or another finds its way into every country in the world-literally form China to Peru... I do not think there is any other factor that has been consistently

working directly and indirectly throughout that period (60 years) with such effect for the advancement of British influence."

Reuter was indeed the handmaiden and vital instrument of Britain's imperial, political policy. Reuter was much feared and respected by Britain's adversaries. At the conclusion of World War I, in September 1918, the Berliner Tageblatt commented; "Mighter and more dangerous than fleet or army is Reuters."

**Britain held key**

Britain controlled the cable lines around the world, and thus held the key to international communication and ensured Reuter's supremacy in international news. This was AP's main grouse against Reuter.

Today in the electronic era, of television, of the satellite, of the computer and the laser beam, the mass media can indeed be a pivotal instrument of farreaching potentialities, which placed in the right and wise hands could do untold good to the world, but in the wrong and selfish hands, could do untold harm to the world. This is the reason why many thinking men in the world are seriously applying their minds to the concept of a new world information order which will ensure not only peace and order in the world but protect the cultural, economic and media interests of the backward countries of the world.

The various national governments of the world are fully conscious of these deadly potentialities of the modern media. and their pronoucements and designs to control and manipulate the mass media as an instrument of policy are unconcealed and publicly stated.

As far back as 1944, the then U.S. Assistant Secretary of State William Benton promised the U.S. Congress: "The State Department plans to do everything within its power to help break down the artificial barriers to the expansion of private American news agencies, magazines, motion pictures and other media of communication."

Later, in 1948 Secretary of State James Byrnes told the House Appropriations Sub-Committee that it was the policy of the State Department "to assist and support private channels of communications in giving the world a correct understanding of America."

John Foster Dulles, President Eisenhower's self-willed Secretary of State, stated: "If I were to be granted one point of foreign policy and no other, I would make it the free flow of information."

"Telecommunications has progressed from being an essential support to our international activities to being also an instrument of foreign policy," noted the Intergovernmental Committee on international communications in its report to the U.S. Senate and House Commerce Committee in 1966.

In the early '50s, as editor of the Times of India, New Delhi, I was trying to counter Reuter monopoly by getting an American news agency into the columes of my paper, and decided that agency should be AP. But AP declined the offer. I happended to mention to Mr. Chester Bowles, the then U.S. Ambassador in New Delhi, my desire to subscribe for an American news agency. Within four days the UPI general manager from New York was in town, at the behest of Mr. Bowles, and we clinched a deal with UPI across the lunch table, with highly favorable terms for my paper.

Such zealous intervention by the U.S. Ambassador to ensure that an American news agency gets access to a country illustrates both the importance attached by the State Department to the spread of its media abroad and the close liaison between the news media and the State Department.

The results are evident even in a country like India. Politically, for reasons of recent history, we are close to the USSR. Yet culturally, we seem to be closer to the USA. Why? Because we have developed the Western traditions of a free press and freedom of expression. But that is not the only reason. A more powerful reason is that Secretary of State Byrnes' and Assistant Secretary of State Benton's and John Foster Dulles' communication policies are paying handsome dividends.

Western news agencies and syndicated columns fill the press columns, and American news magazines Time and Reader's Digest are the popular reading fare. VOA does the rest. Though the Western multinational business houses, Western and mostly American business culture is penetrating the elite and the intelligentsia of the country. Pop music is becoming the rage among the young. The USIS libraries are greatly favored by young and old for the excellent reading matter they provide. The only point where we have resisted is TV, unlike many other less-developed countries (LDCs). The result is a pro-American intellectual climate. Soviet media, in contrast, is ham-handed and constricted.

**Peddled its doctrines**

In the 19th century, Britain, a nation of shopkeepers who lived on exports, peddled the world over the doctrine of Free Trade, and reaped all the benefits from it. In this electronic era, America's overinsistence on Free Flow of information is looked upon by the LDCs as of a piece with the British doctrine of Free trade. With its tremendous head start on the electronic and technological front and its powerful grip on international communications, the U.S. has everything to gain by such free flow of information. Indeed, this free flow is really one-way free flow, entirely to the advantage of U.S. foreign policy and economic and trade interests.

The following passage from a report of the Congress Committee on "Winning the cold war" and "ideological operations and foreign policy" is revealing.—

"Certain foreign policy objectives can be pursued by dealing directly with the people of foreign countries rather than with their governments. Through the use of modern instruments and techniques of commuications, it is possible today to reach large or influential segments of national populations—to inform them, to influence their attitudes, and at times perhaps even to motivate them to a particular course of action. These groups in turn are capable of exerting noticeable, even decisive pressures on their governments."

No wonder, then, that Herbert Schiller, one of your distinguished communications experts, should remark: "Gunboat diplomacy is now an item in the antiquities show case, but communications diplomacy is a very thriving business of the moment. Consider the rich possibilities of radio-television broadcast facilities in a society lacking in industrial base."

## Threats to autonomy

Such then are the potential and indeed actual threats to the national autonomy of developing countries issuing from the Western powers armed with such awesome weapons as the electronic media. Hence the insistent cry from the LDCs for a Draft Declaration governing the use of mass media in the world; and the agitation for a new world information order that would ensure fair, as well as balanced, two-way flow of information. Hence also their demand for effective protection against cultural subversion and against what they consider a neocolonialism via mass media.

As a weak symbolical counter action comes the modest attempt on the part of the non-aligned countries to set up a system of exchange of news among themselves which could fill in the gaps of deficiency in the oneway, imbalanced news flow of the Western transnational news flows agencies.

Thirty years after political independence the LDCs still find themselves embroiled in the colonial economic shackless under which the North dictates to the LDCs, the prices of their raw materials and practices a rigid protectionism and denies the LDCs an equitable share of the world's wealth and are indeed impervious to the latter's cry on fair deal.

## Angry and embittered

And we are surprised, angry and embittered that the advanced West should set their face against these very just and fair demands on the part of the LDCs.

The dilemma before the LDLs therefore is While raising effective defences against cultural invasion via the awesome multi-faceted modern electronic media, how not to shut its windows against the blowing winds of various modern cultures and imbibe the best of those cultures for the enrichment of their own.

A resolution of this difficult dilemma does call for some kind of control and order that could disarm the LDCs' genuine fears, and direct, and regulate the headlong flow of multifaceted media into constructive channels. The hazards precipitated by the electronic revolution, if not voluntarily regulated, of course, by the media professionals and their organizations, will inevitably lead to governmemental control.

It seems to me, therefore, that it is advisable all round to accept the constrained leadership of UNESCO to achieve this vital end rather than let the uncontrolled onrushing media flood take its wild course with unpredictable results to the world.

**Aims and objects of the foremost among the Author Guild shall be :**

**(1) to promote and protect the professional and economic interests of its members or their successors in title as well as of all creators of literary and artistic works, both in India and abroad;**

**(2) to formulate and enforce equitable contracts between authors and publishers;**

**(3) to keep members informed of their rights and interests;**

**(4) to give information and advice concerning problems relating to copyright, authors' rights and marketing of manuscripts**

# A Brief Note on Distorted Ideas on Voltaire

□ TRILOCHAN DAS

Through-out the ages, it has been the misfortune of most great men to be misunderstood and misrepresented. Their lives, works and ideas have often been wrongly interpreted in such a manner that they have been distorted to the greatest possible extent, thereby doing great injustice to the genius of such great noble souls.

Of all such persons Voltaire has perhaps suffered most in the hands of those who have often pretended to have made a thorough study of Voltaire. Even some of his great admirers and well-known as authorities on Voltairean studies have failed to make a correct appraisal of Voltaire in the true perspective.

We shall state here very briefly some of the most important distortions that have been made on Voltaire and his ideas. Such distortions are indeed too numerous and it is rather painful to note that a man of the stature of Voltaire—a man who is widely read, discussed and respected—should be an object of inadvertent appraisals. Such distoritions appear as so many onslaughts on the genius of Voltaire who is universally well-known not only as a man of encyclopaedic knowledge, but is justly admired as a pioneer thinker and as a great humanist—may as a universalist as well.

Let us now briefly enumerate some of the misrepresentations and distortions on Valtaire;

1. Voltaire is one of those who constantly thought and profusely wrote for propagating *patriotic ideas*. And yet one of the greatest critics of France (cf. Jean Orieux: Voltaire who has again been crowned with the prize for Literary Criticism for his study on Voltaire) has made a sweeping remark in his Preface stating that there was little of patriotism in Voltaire (cf. My

paper "Voltaire Comme Patriote"—Journal of Institute de Chandernagore, 1971).

2. In hundred different ways Voltaire has expressed his faith in the existence of God and has shown his allegiance to one Supreme Being, but since he was anticlerical, Voltaire has been considered by some reputed scholars to be an atheist (cf: "*Banglar Navajagaran*" by Kazi Abdul Odud.)

3. Voltaire had great love and admiration for Anquetil Du Perron, yet scholars have characterised Voltiare's attitudes towards Anquetil as unsympathetic.

4. Voltaire had great admiration for India,—as a matter of fact India was the country of Voltaire's dream, yet he has been quoted out of context to prove that Indians were looked down upon by Voltaire.

5. Voltaire not only helped Rousseau when he was faced with financial difficulties and except on rare occasions wanted to extol his creative work; yet many scholars have tried to magnify their difference of opinion. Voltaire's relations with Rousseau have been characterised to be one of jealousy and envy.

6. Voltaire has ranked Camoen along with the great epic poets for his "Lusidas", yet some scholars have misrepresented Voltaire's attitude towards him (cf: Article on Camoen and his Lusidas in Calcutta Review, April, 1950).

7. Eminent French scholars stated that no comparative study could be made between Voltaire and Romain Rolland, yet I have presented a comparative study between the two noble souls of France, having great admiration for India and unbounded love for her people.

8. Some eminent scholar of international repute expressed surprise as to how a comparative study can be made between *Voltaire and Vivekanada*, yet I have successfully completed such a study which none on earth ever dreamt of.

9. Anquitil Du Perron, William Jones, Max Muller and others—all belonging to the younger generation of Voltaire—have been credited to have done pioneering work in Indological Studies, whereas Voltaire may justly be regarded to be the Father of Oriental Studies.

10. Voltaire may justly be hailed as the Apostle of East-West rapprochement, yet eminent scholars have thought that Voltaire pitted the East against the West.

11. Voltaire has been stated to be a militant humanist. A militant humanist he was but in the positive sense and not the negative one, as has been considered by some eminent scholars. Voltaire was a great humanist who never rested by propounding humanistic ideas in theory alone, but gave a concrete shape to such ideas by putting them into practice. (See my paper: *Creative Writing and Social Purpose* in Literary Market Review, Sept. 1976).

12. Voltaire is one of the few persons on earth who did the pioneering work in propounding and professing Universalism.

13. It is widely known and commonly believed, at least in the English speaking world, that Rousseau alone was responsible for inspiring the French Revolution whereas Voltaire's contribution to the French Revolution is not mean.

14. Again it is not also known to many that Voltaire had his little bit of contribution to the Renaissance of India.

These are only some of the points briefly stated here.

These points will be separately dealt with in detail, citing specific instances with copious illustrations of glaring distortions on Voltaire. refuting at the same time such distortions.

and stories during Hitler's regime that were written but never saw print; they were circulated underground by word of mouth, however great the risks from an overwhelming tyranny. These were the great poets and storytellers of Hitler's regime who mattered, not the hundreds honoured by Hitler's establishments.

Dostoevski and Tolstoy were examples of freedom of authors under the Tsarist regime which was not conducive or helpful to them. That they could flourish as writers in spite of Church excommunication and Tsarist oppression spoke volumes about the freedom they claimed and exercised for themselves. They are shining examples of the freedom of authors.

Stalin's Russia which was another kind of tyranny as far as freedom of expression was concerned in the name of the State and its order of things was perhaps total in its suppression of creative expression, by its unfreedoms. But cases are not wanting of courage even in Stalin Russia. Maxim Gorki refused to write about Peter the Great though he was in sympathy with the aims of Stalin's establishment and it is said that he suffered the consequences of such refusal. After Stalin and Gorki we have the examples of Boris Pasternak and Alexander Solshenitsin which are examples of courage under heavy odds. None of the writers could escape the consequences of the freedoms they claimed and exercised in spite of the conditions obtaining and perhaps sometimes even because of it.

Censorship by establishments especially of literary and other creative expressions, is a survival of barbarism among so-called civilised states. But censorship has its advantages. Though a book or a work of art has been censored it enjoys a popularity that is in most cases unprecedented, so that writers might well court the censor to increase sales of their work. This also is a kind of unfreedom though many of us do not recognise it as such. The story is told of how a Pope appealed to by a friendly author to help sales of his unconventional book offered to put it on the books expurgated by the Pope hoping that such an expurgation would help the sales of the book.

In India the author has been comparatively free except for the tyranny of publishers who will not publish any book that will not sell and bring sizeable money to them. The profit motive might work havoc with freedom. This is also a kind of unfreedom, prescribed by growing commercialism and prescribing that authors must produce only mediocre, establishmentarian books. The *freedom not to be mediocre* is also a right of the author which he has to exercise.

To ask a writer what he did in the time of the late Emergency might look like an unanswerable question. Authors have the right to be silent, when it is evident that what they say will not have any effect. Authors achieve a cumulative importance only on the strength of their demonstrated convictions over a long period of writing. Ivo Andric the only Nobel Prize Winner of Yugoslavia is on record as saying, when asked, what he, a liberal, was doing in the days when Yogoslavia was going socialist violently. "I exercised my right to be silent." *A writer's silences can be as effective as his writings and speeches.* And the Emergency was concerned with freedom of the journalist which is quite a different thing from the freedom of author and not merely technically. I can write my protesting master piece and keep it to myself, to publish when circumstances are more favourable, if necessary posthumously when the establishment cannot come down on the author.

If tomorrow in India a Government comes to power which believes in caste supremacy against harijans, all harijan uplift will become non grata. Not that we are not sure whether we have not had such Governments so far: in practice it obtains, if not in theory. Money power is what dictates policy. If we suggest with Jonathan Swift that infant flesh is more delectable and will solve problems of overpopulation and famine, the author might find himself thoroughly unpopular, but Jonathan Swift had the freedom to say it and get away with it.

The freedom of the author is conditioned by what he wants to say and how he says it. He can get away with it escaping consequences by being satirical or ironical or by suggesting his ideas in the shape of Utopias which no one takes seriously but might

slowly effect transformations in the minds of men. Rousseau and Voltaire in eighteenth century France did such things and except for small consequences were comparatively free. The world has since advanced and we have thorough-going establishments and governments who will put in jail any one who thought differently from them even on matters of biology, evolution and higher physics, under the dubious sanction of national safety. Or under the veil of protecting the morals of a people!

The freedom of the writer is however inviolable if what he says is relevant to what he has to say and his book is itself worth while. In other cases, where it is not worth while, fighting about freedom is also not worth while. Debates about freedom tend to take abstract and meaningless forms. Looking at the regional expressions of many things in India one wonders why these persons who express such poisonous things are not in jail. It is becaue our writers are not taken seriously in the national context. Our textbooks are full of poison inspired by regional mediocrity which often passes under the name of loyalty. This freedom is so misused that one regrets so much of freedom in India, all things said and done.

Writers have freedom—which they have not used well at all. They have not cast their weight on the side of humanism and the case of man in general, nor have they fought for the freedom to be unique, individualistic and different. The finest freedom that a writer can claim is to have done his writing well and with courage of conviction. How many of us writers could claim that freedom, I wonder.

"I do not consider myself a very good writer. I do consider myself a good plotter. And I consider myself one hell of a good slaesman as far as manufatured merchandise is concerned." Erle Stanley Gardner in *Erle Stanley Gardner: The Case of the Real Perry Mason by Dorothy B Hughes*

# NEWS & NOTES

## AGI Book Club

There has been heartening response to the idea of the Book Club a blueprint for which was published in the last issue of Indian Author. Quite a few members have written intimating us that they are interested in the idea. The proposal subject to approval by the General Body meeting at Trivandrum will call for twenty-one founder members of the AGI enrolling themselves in the Book Club paying a hundred rupees each. This list of founding members will form the executive body of the AGI Book Club.

It will be the duty of these founding members to enrol as many subscribers to the Book Club paying ordinary subscriptions (annually Rupees ten each). It is not necessary that the ordinary members be members of the AGI as well. When we have five hundred such members we can incorporate and register the body of the AGI Book Club and go ahead. The membership campaign should not stop till we have five thousand members which only will make the AGI Book Club viable. The initial enrolling of five hundred members might be expected to be over, if the 21 founding members will work with a will, by the end of March 1979. It is not necessary for the Founding Members to pay the subscription now; they can pay when the Book Club is formally inaugurated and hopes to begin functioning A draft constitution for the Book Club can be discussed tetatively and adopted.

## Rajaji Centenary

On December 10, 1978 the Rajaji birth centenary was inaugurated officially in Delhi by Neelam Sanjiva Reddy President of India. Statesman, politician, the last Governor General of India and inspiring freedom figher and moralist that Rajaji was, he was also a considerable author of books. He wrote one of the earliest of the best sellers of India *Vvasar Virundhu* retelling the Mahabharata for modern adult readers. In Tamil in which it was originally written it achieved impressive sales within a few years. An English translation published by Bharati Vidya Bhavan was equally successful.

His retelling of the Ramayana was also successful though not as impressively on the sales counter. He has retold the parables of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa as well as the Upanishadic tales in Tamil. He has written a commentary on the Gita, on the Kural, on many other classics of India of a spiritual and moral kind. He

has translated Marcus Aurelius and some of the dialogues of Plato. His English translations from the books of Kural and the Ramayana are exercises in scholarship that are quite impressive.

He attempted to do science books in Tamil-giving simple lessons in chemistry for the villager and in some of the biological and other sciences. In addition he has written quite a number of moralistic tales and stories, though one hesitates justly to call him a short story writer. In addition his occasional essays in Tamil, breathe a sharp wit and intelligence for which he was justly famous.

His Jail Diary, his occasional comments on the events of the day and his opinions on various subjects relating to culture, politics and public affairs will occupy more than ten thousand pages in print. The major part of it was distinguished by clarity of thinking, powerful expression and a manner of saying things which was his own. We hope that the Rajaji Centenary Committee would collect some of these things in book form and offer them to readers in India—not only the present generation but future generations will profit by them.

**Children's Year**

UNESCO has declared 1979 Children's Year. Indian Author April 1979 will be devoted to *Writing for children in India* specially in the languages. Indian Author invites contributions of roughly 1200 words on writing for children, both critical and creative in intent.

Writing for children of various age groups is a more difficult task than is generally realised. More than in adult books, children have to be *told* rather than written for. And it is this idea of talking to children that is a apparently lacking in our midst. One should not talk down to them. One creative book that might help us understand the art of writing for children is book by Psychiatrist Dr R D Laing entitled *Conversations with Children* published by Penguin in 1978. IA will recommend it to every one interested in writing for children though it is an adult book by a psychoanalyst. Taking scientific facts to children is another area which needs to be explored

**Appeal**

This number of Indian Author is thin, just 32 pages as against our usual 48. The Editor appeals to members of the AGI to take more interest in the contents of the Indian Author. We appeal to them to write frequently outlining their problems and commenting on what has been published. Except for a few writers who write again and again most of the members are conspicuously absent from the pages of the I A. It is your forum; you can make it what you want it to become. Articles, correspondence, news and notes items of

*[Cont'd page 32]*

# More About Trivandrum Session

**D R MANKEKAR**

You all must have by now already received my Convention Circular No. 3 which contains the full list of the recipients of the TA/DA facility on the basis of second class fare. The proposal in favour of second class fare circularised has been almost unanimously approved by the members. It is a pity that the Government, far from increasing the grant, has reduced it by Rs. 3,000/- from Rs. 58,000/- last year to Rs. 55000/- this year, whereas we had requested for Rs. 70,000/- this year. This means only 50,000/- will be available for payment of TA/DA to outstation members. In view of the vast distance involved for members desiring to attend the session held in far South, the amount of grant available has to be spread thinly among the applicants for TA/DA and hence the need for cotting the train fare to second class.

As in the past, the list has been prepared strictly on the basis of first-come-first-served. On this basis, only 180 out of 215 applicants could be accommodated. This means that some 35 members have to be disappointed. I am sorry that this has to be so.

I am looking forward to not only a very successful but also a historic session of our convention in Trivandrum. In the last issue of 'Indian Author' we have already announced that the renowned Kannada playwright and author Dr. Shivaram Karanth will preside over the session. The following is the tentative agenda that has been fixed for the Trivandrum session :-

**Agenda for 29, 30, 31 December 1978 (Friday, Saturday & Sunday)**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Friday | | |
| 29-12-1978 | 10.00 a.m. to 10.45 a.m. | —Annual General Body meeting of AGI |
| | 3.00 p.m. | —Annual General Body Meeting of AGI Publishing Cooperative Society. |
| Saturday | | |
| 30-12-1978 | 10.00 a.m. to 10.45 a.m. | —Inaugural function |
| | 10.45 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. | —Coffee break |
| | 11.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. | —Authors Relations with Publishers. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1.00 p.m. to | 2.30 p.m. | —Lunch |
| | 2.30 p.m. to | 5.00 p.m. | —Malayalam literature - Authors, Publishers, Readers, Distributers and Book-Sellers. |
| Sunday 31-12-1978 | 10.00 a.m. to | 1.00 p.m. | —North-South Dialogue - The Communication Problem. |
| | 11.30 a.m. to | 11.45 a.m. | —Coffee break |
| | 11.45 a.m. to | 1.00 p.m. | —North-South Dialogue (contd) |
| | 1.00 a.m. to | 2.30 p.m. | —Lunch |
| | 2.30 p.m. to | 4.00 p.m. | —Children's Literature and Art-authors, writers and publishers of Children's Books-plans for celebrating the Year of the Child by AGI |
| | 4.00 p.m. to | 4.30 p.m. | —Tea break |
| | 4.30 p.m. to | 5.30 p.m. | —Concluding Plenary Session Valedictory address. |

In the above agenda, we attach great importance to the item "North-South Dialogue-The Communication Problem", for which we have allotted the longest period. We, as authors and writers of this country, owe a moral duty in making a constructive contribution to a solution of the North-South controversy that would at once preserve the political integrity as well as cultural unity of this country of ours.

It is therefore hoped that participants in this "dialogue" will be conscious of their onerous responsibility and bend their minds and hearts to formulate a constructive national consensus that will meet the obligations of the construction as well as disarm the apprehensions of Indians from the Non-Hindi regions.

The problem is raising its ugly head once again in the country. We believe that a healthy and constructive dialogue between the two sides, in the true democratic fashion, will dissipate apprehensions all round and provide a constructive formula. If AGI succeeds in this endeavour, it will be a concrete achievement of which AGI could be fistly proud of.

In the last issue of INDIAN AUTAOR (July-September 1978) we published a "Blueprint for a Books-of-the-Month Club". In this issue, we publish in News & Notes other

concrete proposals We propose to throw open the colums of this journal for a discussion on the interesting scheme and look forward to receiving suggestions and comments on the subject from our members.

As in the past, a Special Number of INDIAN AUTHOR, spread over 60 pages, will be brought out on the eve of the Trivandrum session of the Authors Convention. This Special Number will have an accent on Kerala's literature art and culture.

It is essential that we should have as many advertishments as possible for the Special Number as this is the only way for us to build up our finances, as the meagre annual membership subscription of Rs. 30/- (inclusive of the cost of the journal's Indian Author') is inadequate to bear the expenditure involved in running the secretaruat of the organisation.

**NEW & NOTES** *(Cont'd from page 29)*

national importance are welcomed from each of the members to make INDIAN AUTHOR a vehicle of importance carrying your ideas and problems and sometimes attempting solutions for them.

The idea of issues devoted to special problems is to enable our members to participate more fully in the pages of the Indian Author. The April 1979 issue of IA will be devoted to writing for children. The subsequent issue will be devoted to science writing. Articles on these two subjects are invited.

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**"A common fault in writing is to spend too much time for the early part of a composition. As a result some ideas receive too much attention simply because they are considered first and others too little attention because they come later."**

**—Robert Barrass in** *Scientists Must Write*

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